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FM AMEMBASSY QUITO  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4033  
INFO RUEHBO/AMEMBASSY BOGOTA PRIORITY 5521  
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS PRIORITY 1676  
RUEHLP/AMEMBASSY LA PAZ MAR 9768  
RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA PRIORITY 0483  
RUEHGL/AMCONSUL GUAYAQUIL PRIORITY 0227  
RHMFISS/CDR USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL

UNCLAS QUITO 000817

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E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [EC](#)

SUBJECT: INDIGENOUS PLAN PROTESTS, OTHERS WANT DIALOGUE

¶1. Summary: Indigenous leaders met on March 31 in Tunguragua province to discuss future anti-FTA protest plans. Leaders of the main indigenous organization, CONAIE, rejected an agreement signed by the GOE with other groups to begin greater education and dialogue on the FTA. Indigenous in Imbabura province and the main evangelical indigenous group are also calling for greater dialogue on the costs and benefits of an FTA. The evangelical indigenous organization FEINE and the campesino organization FENOCIN are planning anti-FTA marches from various provinces to reach Quito beginning April 4. End Summary.

¶2. Approximately 200 indigenous leaders held an assembly on March 31 in Salasaca, Tunguragua province, to discuss possible protests for the following week. The meeting was moved from Chimborazo province, which remains under a state of emergency suspending freedom of assembly. GOE officials had threatened to enforce the ban, so the meeting was moved to neighboring Tunguragua province, where the state of emergency is not in effect. Santiago de la Cruz, vice president of CONAIE, told PolOff on March 30 that he did not feel the government was responding adequately to CONAIE demands. Protests, to be defined in the March 31 meeting, would continue until that perception changes. De La Cruz was adamant that CONAIE did not seek to bring down the Palacio government.

Dividing the Indigenous

¶3. Minister of Government Felipe Vega signed an agreement with some indigenous leaders, including Chimborazo provincial authorities, on March 29 in Riobamba. In it, the GOE agreed to start a pilot program in Chimborazo province to publicize information on the free trade agreement. The government would finance conferences with students and others to help provide information on the FTA. CONAIE leaders rejected the agreement and refuse to dialogue with the GOE. On March 31, Mercedes del Castillo, assistant to the Otavalo mayor (in Imbabura province), told PolOff that indigenous leaders in Imbabura had sent a resolution to the CONAIE meeting in Salasaca rejecting any more protest mobilizations, and instead proposing dialogue and education on the FTA.

FEINE and FENOCIN To March To Quito

¶4. Meanwhile, and independent of CONAIE's moves, evangelical indigenous organization FEINE and indigenous and campesino organization FENOCIN have announced they will join for anti-FTA mobilizations, arriving in Quito beginning April 4. Marco Murillo, head of FEINE, announced that members of his

organization will mobilize the week of April 3, while also holding debates on the FTA in Otavalo and Latacunga. FENOCIN leader Pedro de la Cruz has announced that his organization's protests will be peaceful and would not include road blocks. FENOCIN estimates that 7,000 of its members will march from various provinces to Quito. An advisor to Marco Murillo of FEINE, told PolOff on March 31 that FEINE was calling for dialogue with various sectors, especially business, on the FTA.

Comment

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15. The impetus for protests will likely weaken should the current FTA round end inconclusively, and it remains to be seen if CONAIE can successfully turn out large numbers of protesters in the capital. Calls for dialogue are a positive sign and offer the GOE an opportunity to inform the public about prospective FTA benefits.

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